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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 004954

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SUBJECT: DOES KMT CHAIRMAN MA HAVE AN INNER CIRCLE?

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

11. (C) Summary. Only five months after being overwhelmingly elected KMT Chairman, Ma Ying-jeou, also Mayor of Taipei, has emerged as the presumptive KMT nominee for president in 2008.

As the KMT's prospective presidential candidate, Ma will need to take positions on cross-Strait policy, defense spending, KMT reform and campaign strategy, and a host of other complicated issues. This cable is the first of several intended to shed light on Ma's leadership style and decision-making process, and to identify his primary advisers. This cable focuses on Ma's advisers within the academic community. End Summary.

Ma's Circle of Academic Advisors

12. (C) One of KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou's sources of expertise is an informal circle of academics that advises him on international relations matters. KMT International Affairs Director and National Chengchi University professor Ho Szu-yin, a member of this group, told AIT December 16 that while Ma was serving as law professor at National Chengchi University in 1981-1993, he formed personal friendships with a number of people in the Taiwan academic community, many of whom he continues to call on for advice on domestic and international policy issues. Ho identified Min Zhu-zheng, Bao Zhong-he, Gao Lang, and Chu Yun-han of National Taiwan University's Political Science Department, and himself and Dong Bao-cheng of National Chengchi University's Law School, as those perhaps most often consulted by Ma. Ho added that to his knowledge, Ma has no formal, regularized meetings to discuss policy issues, but instead conducts discussions with these former academic colleagues on an ad-hoc basis. Ho said Ma, like the former academic he is, actively seeks out various viewpoints, and favors open and active debate within this group of informal advisers.

Ma's Cross-Strait Views

13. (C) Ho told AIT that based on his private conversations with Ma and on Ma's public statements, Chairman Ma's cross-Strait policy can be boiled down to two main principles: continue dtente diplomacy with China, while maintaining a strong defense for Taiwan. Ho said Ma "believes deeply" in the Republic of China, and is "very anti-communist." He pointed out that while virtually all of Ma's advisers have visited the Mainland, Ma himself has steadfastly refused to go. Ho explained that Ma "will not go for reunification in name or substance" and will go no further than to accept a "One China, Different Interpretations" characterization of the '92 Consensus." Ho noted that he and others he considers part of Ma's "international relations team" believe that Taiwan's acceptance of this version of the '92 Consensus would satisfy the PRC such that cross-Strait relations could move forward.

KMT Power Dynamics

14. (C) Ho told AIT that the KMT's landslide victory on December 3 had put control of the KMT firmly in Ma's hands, effectively neutralizing any potential threat from LY Speaker Wang Jin-pyng. Ho stressed that while he can no longer challenge Ma's leadership of the party, Wang is not isolated, and can still leverage his ability to mobilize voters and to integrate local factions to gain influence within the party. According to Ho, Wang also has a small cabal of LY members who remain loyal to him personally and would vote as he instructed. As such, Ho said, it is reasonable to expect that Wang will remain at the top of the KMT's "at-large" ticket during the next LY election, in order to maintain a strong KMT coalition within the LY.

15. (C) The relationship between Ma and former KMT Chairman Lien Chan, Ho continued, is "congenial but not particularly warm." Ma understands that close involvement in cross-Strait affairs can only hurt him at this point, and therefore is happy for Lien, in his capacity as Director of the KMT-sponsored National Policy Foundation (NPF) thinktank, to remain the front man for the party's cross-Strait portfolio. Ma and Lien speak frequently, Ho told AIT, and both men have expressed a "willingness to exchange ideas." Ho said communication between Lien and Ma is also assured since many

senior members of the KMT Party Secretariat also work at the NPF.

16. (C) Comment: While Ho's characterization of Ma's informal advisers may be accurate, it is also true that this group is jockeying to survive the Lien-Ma transition and to gain influence. Therefore, AIT cautions it may take additional time to get a reliable picture of Ma's methods as Chairman. End Comment.

Bio Note on Ho Szu-yin

17. (C) Prof. Ho Szu-yin was formerly Director of National Chengchi University's highly respected Institute of International Relations. He stepped down in 2003 after KMT Chairman Lien Chan recruited him to serve as Director of the KMT International Affairs office. Ho was not a party member before Lien's invitation, and joined the party only when he accepted the offered position. Ho told AIT that, despite his KMT position, he is still considered "part of the academic community" both within and outside of the KMT.
PAAL